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CC: council@cityofcamas.us
Subject: Public Comment — June 1, 2026 City Council Workshop — Form of Government Committee Presentation

Please include the following comments in the public record for the June 1, 2026 City Council Workshop, agenda item 3: "Form of Government Committee Presentation." If this proposal is later considered at another Council meeting or under a related agenda item, I respectfully request that these comments also be included or cross-referenced in that public record.

Dear Mayor Hogan and Members of the Camas City Council,

I am writing regarding the current discussion about a possible form-of-government change in Camas, commonly described as a move from the current strong-mayor or mayor-council structure toward a strong-council or council-manager form of government.

A change in the structure of city government is not simply an administrative matter. It affects how residents understand accountability, how decisions are made, and where responsibility rests when major public choices are made.

The council-manager model may be presented as a way to provide more professional administration, greater consistency, and more efficient management of city operations. Those may be legitimate goals. Nearby cities may also be cited as examples of communities that use this structure. But administrative efficiency and regional comparison should not be treated as sufficient by themselves. The question is whether this change would improve transparency, public access, and public accountability in Camas, under Camas's specific circumstances.

Camas is already facing serious public concern about growth, development pressure, housing affordability, the loss of open space, and the difficulty ordinary residents have in understanding how major decisions move through the city process. In that context, any proposed move from the current mayor-council structure to a council-manager form of government should clearly explain how accountability would work in practice.

The public should be able to understand where authority would move, who would be responsible for major decisions, and how residents would hold decision-makers accountable. Would the proposed council-manager structure make land-use, development, infrastructure, and budget decisions easier for residents to follow? Would it make responsibility clearer? Would it give the public a stronger voice earlier in the process? Or would it make major decisions feel even more distant from ordinary residents?

Those questions should be answered clearly before this proposal advances.

This is especially important because Camas has often relied on long-standing civic voices and advisory groups to help shape major recommendations. That is not an accusation. Experience and public service matter. But continuity of leadership also makes it important to ask whether the proposed change would improve public accountability, or whether existing decision-making patterns would continue under a different structure.

Past major proposals, including the 2019 Proposition 2 community aquatics center bond — a $78 million proposal ultimately rejected by voters — show why major recommendations should include a clear public explanation of how they were developed, who is accountable for them, and how any change in government structure would improve that accountability.

Change may well be needed. The question is whether this proposed change is the right kind of change. If the goal is accountability, transparency, and better public representation, the public should be shown how a move from mayor-council government to council-manager government would improve those things in practice.

A different approach, or at least a parallel step, would be to strengthen the role of Council members and residents earlier in the decision-making process. For example, the City could create clearer pathways for Council members to appoint residents from their districts to advisory boards, committees, or issue-specific review groups. That would give neighborhoods and affected residents a stronger voice before major decisions are already moving forward.

The goal should be more accountable representation, not diluted responsibility. Any form-of-government change should make it easier for residents to know who is responsible, easier for Council members to represent their constituents, and easier for the public to influence major decisions before those decisions are already underway.

Before Camas moves from its current mayor-council structure toward a council-manager form of government, I respectfully ask the Council to clearly explain how the proposed change would improve transparency, accountability, Council representation, and public influence over major city decisions, especially as growth and development continue to reshape the community.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey Hunt